

D O R O T H Y G A S T O N

Interviewed August 7, 1975

by Dr. Louis D. Silveri

S O U T H E R N H I G H L A N D S R E S E A R C H C E N T E R

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Dorothy Gaston, interviewed by Dr. Louis D. Silveri, August 7, 1975.

Dr. Silveri: In order to get the historical perspective right, when were you born and where were you born?

Dorothy Gaston: Do you think I want to tell the whole nation that?

Silveri: Can you give me an approximation?

Gaston: I won't give you an approximate date; I'll give you an exact date.

Silveri: Very good.

Gaston: Not that I'm terribly enthused.

Silveri: This is just so we can put everything that you're saying in historical context. Of course, you remember the day you were born, right? I mean, you know the day you were born, and the year?

Gaston: I told you, you know, that we lived in this farmhouse above the plant.

Silveri: What was the locality known as then, just Buncombe County? You were in the county?

Gaston: Yes, it was Buncombe County, and it was Lower Hominy. We called it Lower Hominy. I was born in this farmhouse. My father built this farmhouse above the creek and, as I say, there were nine children. I was the third, and I was born in this farmhouse, September 19, 1895. I'm telling you the truth, and I don't mind it a bit.

Silveri: Oh, great, that's great. You said, I think, before that your mother's maiden name was Moore.

Gaston: Lucy Swain Moore.

Silveri: Lucy Swain Moore. Now Swain and Moore are two very well-known names in that community, right?

Gaston: That's right, and my father was Thomas Pinckney Gaston.

Silveri: Thomas Pinckney Gaston. How far back do you know on your father's side? How far back can you go?

Gaston: Well, my father's father was Josiah Perry Gaston. He was in the Civil War, and he was a prisoner of war when the treaty was signed at Appomattox Court House. He was released, and he walked from Appomattox Court House back down to Buncombe County. It took him three weeks, and he brought news of the surrender, and nobody had known it up 'til that time. They hadn't known that the war was over.

He came to the other side of the French Broad River. His family lived in what we call West Asheville now. His clothes were so torn and so dirty and filled with lice and things like that, that he stopped on the other side of the river and called somebody. Then he took his clothes off and bathed in the river. They brought him some fresh clothes to go up to the house. That's what I've heard always, and I think it's the truth. That's about as far back in my father's family --I told you I didn't know too much about that.

Silveri: This story was told to you by your father?

Gaston: Yes, that's right. We've heard it always.

Silveri: Oh, this Civil War person that you were talking about?

Gaston: Yes, Josiah Perry Gaston.

Silveri: Do you remember your father telling you any other stories about the Civil War?

Gaston: Nothing in particular that I can remember. Later they moved out and lived where the Baptist Church is; that was the old Gaston home.

Silveri: Do you know how far back the first Gaston came into the mountains?

Gaston: No.

Silveri: Was your grandfather born in the mountains?

Gaston: Go in there on the dining room table and bring me--I tried to find something there--just bring me that, those papers.

Silveri: Do you need your glasses?

Gaston: I guess I might. This is it. That's a little bit of history that I have.

Silveri: Josiah Perry Gaston is the one you were talking about.

Gaston: That's right.

Silveri: That took part in the Civil War, and he was born in Lancaster County, South Carolina. Maybe I should read this through right now, because I'm sure you don't want to give up this copy.

"Josiah Perry Gaston, son of Thomas Logan and Prudence Dolan Gaston, was born April 30, 1832, in Lancaster County, South Carolina. When he was a small boy, his family moved to West Asheville. He was the grandson of Thomas Gaston, who was born July 18, 1759, and died April 23, 1832. Thomas served in the Revolution as an irregular, and the powder horn used by him is at this time in the possession of one of the descendants in Asheville, North Carolina."

Is that you?

Gaston: No, but I think I can show you a picture of the horn here.

Silveri: "The same horn was used by another member of the family in the War of 1812 and the Civil War. These dates appear on the horn."

Gaston: That's my cousin [who] has that horn. I have a picture of it somewhere here.

Silveri: "On August 23, 1855, J.P. Gaston married Martha Elvira Jones, and they lived in West Asheville on the banks of the French Broad near Carrier Field. In 1873 they moved to Hominy Valley to the farmhouse built by Russell L. Jones, who was the father of Martha Elvira Jones, and which stood on the location where the Enka Baptist Church now stands. There were ten children born to this marriage: Thomas Logan, Russell Jones, Thomas Pinckney" (which was your--)

Gaston: My father.

Silveri: "Parley, Edwin Lamar, Annie (who became Mrs. Charles Ingram), Minnie (who became Mrs. W.E. Fletcher), Mamie (who became Mrs. Thomas Howie, H-o-w-i-e), and Mrs. James H. Brown, Clarence Perry."

Gaston: Clarence Perry's son has that powder horn.

Silveri: Oh, he's the one who has that? Okay.

"Adie (who became Mrs. Wayne Alexander). The only living survivor is Mrs. W.E. Fletcher."

Gaston: She's not living now.

Silveri: "When the war broke out in the spring of 1861, Josiah P. Gaston was a volunteer in the Rough and Ready Guards, which was organized in Asheville under Zeb Vance. This group left Asheville on May 3, 1861, with Zeb Vance as captain and camped out until reaching the railroad, and then went on the train to Statesville, where they went into camp and drilled for two weeks. They went from Statesville to Raleigh and remained there for ten or fifteen days; then to Garysburg, where the Fourteenth North Carolina Regiment was formed. The Rough and Ready Guard made up one company known as Company F. Members of this company participated in the seven days of fighting at Richmond, the battles of Sharpsburg, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Kelly's Ford, Martinsburg, the Battle of the Wilderness, Winchester, and others.

"After the battle of Seven Pines on July 23, 1862, the battle of Malvern Hills came off, in which Company F suffered a great deal. Among other casualties, J.P. Gaston

Silveri (Cont'd.): 'was wounded and captured, exchanged soon, and promoted to first adjutant in the 64th Regiment.

"Josiah Perry Gaston brought the first news to Asheville of the surrender. This was nearly three weeks after Lee surrendered. Gaston walked all the way from Appomattox Court House and showed his parole. There was still fighting around Asheville. Stoneman was besieging on the south and Kirk's army on the north, and General J.G. Martin went out under a flag of truce and an agreement to give the Federal Troops three days' rations and furnish them on condition that they should not destroy private or public property.

"It has been told by members of this family that when Perry Gaston reached his home after his three weeks' walk from Appomattox his shoes were completely worn out, and his clothing was in such shape from filth and vermin that he stood at the river near his home and called until someone heard him. A change of clothes was brought, and after he bathed in the river he buried the clothes which he had worn before seeing his family.

"Josiah Perry Gaston was a man who was interested in his neighborhood and loved his fellow man. He was a member of the Methodist church and was superintendent of several Sunday schools. He had a very powerful bass voice and loved to sing. Older members of the family can recall how nothing pleased him more than to have a group gather at his home in the evening, where he would lead in the singing of old familiar hymns and songs. He was a Knight Templar in the Masonic Lodge and on two occasions took a trip to California and Utah on business connected with this order. Perry Gaston died May 5, 1890, and was buried in the family cemetery on the hill above his home. Later his body was moved by his family to the Oak Forest Cemetery."

Gaston: Right here.

Silveri: "His father, Thomas Logan Gaston, is buried under the present site of the Central Methodist Church in Asheville, North Carolina.

"J.P. Gaston's war record was taken from an article published in the Asheville Times on October 9 and October 16, 1921. The article was written by N.B. Westall, one of the twelve original members of the Rough and Ready Guards, still alive on that date. Mr. Westall was Third Sergeant of old Company F, 14th North Carolina Infantry, and was appointed one of the company of three to write the Company history."

Silveri: (Cont'd.) Well, since Perry Gaston died in 1890, you never did get to know him.

Gaston: That's right, but I do know that his body was moved to this cemetery right here.

Silveri: Okay. I wanted to ask you: It mentions that when Josiah was a small boy his family moved to West Asheville, which is this area, right? How much acreage did they own when they moved here?

Gaston: I don't know.

Silveri: But it was quite extensive?

Gaston: I don't really know.

Silveri: Okay. Fine.

Gaston: I think it probably was all the family together. Now he married a Jones. He married Martha Jones, and her father owned quite a bit of land in the area. So, taken together that way, I judge it was quite a good deal.

Silveri: Your father was born in West Asheville, right?

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: When your father was growing up, what opportunities did he have getting an education in this area?

Gaston: Now you know, I don't know. There was a school out here, Sand Hill School, that was established a long time ago, and everybody from around in this section went to that Sand Hill School. Well, I know my father did. Then he married; he was married twice. He and his first wife. . . I don't know how this happened, but they went west, went out to Oregon in the Snake River Valley, and there, there were

Gaston (Cont'd.): three children born. Then his wife died, and he came back here and brought those little children to his mother's home down here. Those children died. There was only one left, and that was my half-sister. Later my father married my mother, and they had eight children.

Silveri: Your father was engaged in farming then, was he?

Gaston: Yes, always.

Silveri: Always.

Gaston: Farming and fruit. He loved fruit, and on his farm he had a lot of fruit trees. He bought some mountain land, a hundred and twenty acres of this. It's called Gaston Mountain. You passed it coming from Enka. He had an orchard of apples, grapes and peaches up on this mountain. He sold it from up there. There were no roads, and they had to take a sled and pack their fruit on the sled and bring it down; then the next morning early, take it to Asheville.

Silveri: Let's talk about your mother's side. You were talking to me before that your mother was a Moore, Swain. Her first name was . . .

Gaston: Lucy Swain Moore. It was originally M-o-r-e. I have a plaque in there that shows where it was M-o-r-e, but now it is always M-o-o-r-e.

Silveri: You said that you can trace that side of the family back to the Revolutionary times, right?

Gaston: Yes, yes.

Silveri: And would you tell that story again when that Moore . . .

Gaston: That was William Moore. Let me see just a minute here.

Gaston (Cont'd.): From Ulster Province, Ireland, and there were three of them that came over here. William Moore was born in 1726 in Ulster Province, Ireland, and he died November 11, 1812. He had two children. He had one son and one daughter. His son was William Moore. I'm getting kind of tangled up here a little bit. No, he had three sons. Let me just tell you as I remember. He had one son named Charles. As I told you, William built this fort down here to live in. At his death, his son Charles lived in this vicinity and he was the one who was very anxious to educate his children. He had no way of educating his children. He was worried about that.

Now this story, as I've always heard it, is that he was lying on a bearskin rug in front of an open fire one night and he was puzzling about the problem of educating his children, when there came a knock on the door. He knew it wasn't an Indian because Indians never knocked. So he said, "Come in." This young man came in, and proved to be a young Presbyterian minister from Maryville, Tennessee. His name was Reverend Jacob Hood, and he was just coming through this section. I never did know exactly where he was going or what he was going to do.

But anyhow, during their conversation and all, he spent the night. He said he would teach the children in the neighborhood. So they got together and established a school here and Reverend Jacob Hood taught that school for some time. That's the way that Sand Hill School was started, and it's been a good school ever since.

Silveri: I think you are talking of a period of time before the Civil War, isn't it?

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: Let's go back to the first William Moore, and how he happened to find out about the mountains.

Gaston: At the end of the Revolutionary War the Cherokee Indians had been placed in a reservation out here in the western county known as the Cherokee Reservation. They were supposed to stay in this reservation, but they had been (bands of these Indians) going out through the counties and stealing and killing the cattle, and things of that kind. So General Griffith Rutherford sent a band of men to gather up these Indians and take them back to the reservation. Don't know whether they thought they would stay there or not, but anyhow they discerned them.

Now, William Moore was in command of this group of soldiers. There's a very interesting article here that he's written about all that he saw of the mountains while he was going through. You can read it if want it. Anyhow, he thought this section through here was the most beautiful section he had ever seen in his life, and he thought if he got out of this war alive he would come back here and build him a home, which he did.

He built a fort, and he brought some slaves and put them here to take care of it 'til he could go home and get his affairs arranged and bring his family up here. Then later he was given a grant of four hundred acres of land by Governor Richard Caswell, in this section around through here. That's where he lived.

Silveri: Didn't you tell me he was the first white settler in the Hominy Valley?

Gaston: Yes. West of the Blue Ridge.

Silveri: West of the Blue Ridge.

Gaston: That's right. Then he had a son, Charles, and Charles had a son named William Hamilton. That was my mother's father.

Silveri: Did any members on your mother's side of the family fight in the Civil War? Has that been handed down?

Gaston: Not that I know. I don't know that. It was on my father's side.

Silveri: Where was your mother born?

Gaston: My mother was born right in this vicinity, right near the Asheville School down here.

Silveri: She probably went to the Asheville School?

Gaston: No, no. That was for boys. Asheville School for Boys was not . . . there were not any girls then. It is co-ed now, but not then. There's an Asheville School Lake down here. Maybe you've driven over there? I guess you don't know that yet, though. But anyhow, she was born right in this vicinity.

Silveri: When were your parents born?

Gaston: My father was born in 1860, and my mother was born in 1867.

Silveri: Do you have the date of their marriage?

Gaston: January 18, 1893.

Silveri: That happened to be a pretty tough decade; I don't know if they ever mentioned anything about the Cleveland Panic in the 1890's?

Gaston: Now I don't know. I don't know about that.

Silveri: You were born in 1895?

Gaston: That's right.

Silveri: When you were growing up, what school did you go to?

Gaston: Well, I went to Sand Hill School out here, and then I went to the Asheville Normal Teacher's Training School because at that time the only thing a girl could do was teach. There was nothing else. So I became a teacher.

Silveri: What did that school become?

Gaston: The Sand Hill School?

Silveri: No, the other one, the Normal School?

Gaston: Oh, it isn't in existence any longer, but it was established by the Presbyterian Board, the Northern Presbyterian Board. They had this school down here, and it was for teacher training. I don't know how many pupils there were there. I can't remember. It's been so long ago.

Silveri: Where was it located?

Gaston: In Asheville, right where the Memorial Mission Hospital is now.

Silveri: I see, but you went to the Sand Hill School for your elementary training?

Gaston: That's right.

Silveri: Where did you go for high school training?

Gaston: Sand Hill High School, too. I was in the first graduating class of the Sand Hill High School.

Silveri: Nineteen Hundred and Eight?

Gaston: I can't remember exactly. I graduated from the Asheville Normal about 1916 or '17, somewhere along there.

Silveri: All this time you were still living here?

Gaston: In this farmhouse above the plant, but my father sold that in 1929.

Silveri: We will get to that a little later. I wanted to ask you if you did any teaching after your training?

Gaston: Oh, yes.

Silveri: Where?

Gaston: In Little Rock, Arkansas.

Silveri: Oh, you left home.

Gaston: I left home. The reason I did that: my brother, my oldest brother, was working out there then. He had gone out there to work, and so I went out there to teach.

Silveri: That was as soon as you graduated from Normal School?

Gaston: That's right.

Silveri: You really wanted to get away and see a little bit of the country?

Gaston: No, it wasn't that so much, except that I had some relatives out there, and my brother was working out there, and they wanted me to come and teach. I did. The first school that I ever taught, there weren't any children in the vicinity much. There were three children in this school. Sounds impossible.

Silveri: How long did you teach out there?

Gaston: Oh, I came home about 1926, I guess. I was tired of teaching, and I stopped and took a business course. Then I worked in the Chamber of Commerce for one year.

Silveri: Out in Little Rock?

Gaston: No, here.

Silveri: You spent ten years out in Arkansas?

Gaston: About that. Then, as I say, I worked for the Chamber of Commerce for one year. Then I went to work at Enka, September 1, 1929, and I was there until I retired in 1960.

Silveri: Now, you said that your father sold some of the land that Enka bought. About how many acres did he have by then?

Gaston: I don't know how many acres, Mr. Silveri. It was not a great big farm, but he sold it all.

Silveri: Now, Enka bought over two thousand acres.

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: Was most of that from your father?

Gaston: No, my father didn't have that much. All the farmers that lived in that vicinity sold their land to Enka. I don't know how much land my father had.

Silveri: But he didn't sell all of it, did he?

Gaston: Yes, he sold every bit of it.

Silveri: So he had to move the family away?

Gaston: That's right.

Silveri: Oh, where did you move to?

Gaston: Right here.

Silveri: Right here to this house?

Gaston: He built this house.

Silveri: Your father built this house?

Gaston: I told you how they divided it. . . the neighbors. Five families sold their land to Enka. So they bought this in one section here from the real estate man and then divided it among themselves, about thirty acres.

Silveri: Now Enka came in '28, and you were employed by Enka in 1929. What was your first job with Enka?

Gaston: I didn't know this was an interview on me; I thought it was other things.

Silveri: Well, you've become part of the story.

Gaston: My first job at Enka was as a labor inspector, where I had to buy my own car. Never owned a car in my life, but to get the job I had to have a car. Then I had to go out and interview girls who had applications in to work at Enka. . . around in the mountain country.

Silveri: Oh, I see.

Gaston: I did that for about three or four years. . . two or three years, I guess.

Silveri: How far out would you range in this job? Would you go to Madison County?

Gaston: Haywood County, Transylvania, Henderson.

Silveri: Why would you go out there? Why didn't girls come here for the interview?

Gaston: I don't know, but there were about four or five women known as labor inspectors. Each morning we would be called into this office and given so many names to go out and interview.

Silveri: What were you supposed to be looking for?

Gaston: Well, the type of girl she was, her education, her family background, and all those things. They were very particular then. Later, they employed almost anybody that came, and were glad to get them.

Silveri: So you ranged all through the mountains, and you'd get a chance to see some places around here that you hadn't seen before?

Gaston: Yes. Of course, I knew a lot of it anyway.

Silveri: You knew a lot of it? Well, did you really go up to the coves and hollows?

Gaston: Oh, yes. That's where we went, mostly.

[End of Side I]

[Beginning of Side II]

Silveri: What kind of living conditions did you find?

Gaston: Oh, well, I guess you would call them not too good, maybe. But it was the kind of living conditions I had sort of been used to all my life. I mean, little homes, very different from the way it looks now, since Enka came and people built homes up in the coves and valleys that were very different from what they were when I first went.

Silveri: Largely homes where they practices self-sufficient agriculture? In other words, they raised most of what they used?

Gaston: Yes, I would say they did; we did.

Silveri: Do you remember any particular cases that stand out in your mind when you went around inspecting?

Gaston: I went to one (this is just a little funny thing) home, and a girl came out to meet me in the yard. She had a little baby in her arms. I was out of the car talking to her and the baby kept holding out its arms. It wanted to come to me. The girl said, "Hit thinks you're her Grandma Warren." They were all friendly; everybody was friendly. Of course, everybody wanted a job and were glad to get a job.

Silveri: You said you went around in an automobile. It must have been difficult to travel around. The roads must have been pretty bad.

Gaston: Some of them. Terrible. You'd get stuck a lot of times.

Silveri: Would you have a noonday meal with some of these families?

Gaston: Not too often. Sometimes you would be asked to come in, but no, we were working most of the time.

Silveri: Did you enjoy that job?

Gaston: Yes. Yes, I did. I liked it.

Silveri: What job was next?

Gaston: Well, they had what they called a Welfare Office. We would have to go and see why people were absent; go check on people that were absent. That wasn't too good, but we did it.

Silveri: Incidentally, I wanted to ask you: Were the mountain people (and I think you have possibly answered this before) anxious to see the plant established here?

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: Why?

Gaston: They wanted jobs.

Silveri: They were very anxious to have jobs so they could get some cash . . .

Gaston: That's right. That's right.

Silveri: . . . for the things they needed very much. What about the pollution? It must have had the problem, the odor, as soon as it started working?

Gaston: I guess you just got 'til you didn't notice it. People come in now and talk about it and I don't notice it because I've been used to it so long.

Silveri: I see.

Gaston: I don't remember that there was too much complaint about it. They say it smells so bad, but I say, "It smells like bread and butter to me."

Silveri: Yes, I've heard that. About how long were you in this special position that you mentioned?

Gaston: Well, I'd say (no, I can't remember) five or six years, maybe.

Silveri: These are the years of the 1930's then, and years of the Great Depression. Do you remember those?

Gaston: The banks closed and everything. It was bad.

Silveri: What impact did it have on Enka? Do you remember? For instance, was your job in jeopardy?

Gaston: There have been times, I don't remember whether it was at that time, that I would wonder, "Well, am I going to be here very much longer?" It may have been around that time.

Silveri: Had your brother become associated with Enka yet?

Gaston: I don't remember just exactly when he came to work. He was at State College. Yes, he came to work when I was working in the Welfare Department, when I was checking up on people to see why they didn't come to work, and so forth.

Silveri: What kind of position did he have when he first came?

Gaston: Life Guard at the Enka Lake pool. Then he got into the Engineering Department from there. He had graduated in engineering from State College.

Silveri: Were there any other Gastons working for Enka over the years?

Gaston: Well, Sonny Gaston works now; the one who owns the powder horn. Well, I just can't remember. Maybe just not the name, Gaston.

Silveri: While you were working at Enka, you lived here in this house?

Gaston: I lived in the farmhouse 'til we moved. We moved in October, 1929. I went to work. Yes, I lived in this house.

Silveri: Was the depression hard for the people you knew in this region? Was it hard for them to get along during the '30's?

Gaston: It was hard on us, and it was hard on the people all around. It was hard on everybody. The banks closed. It was hard to get money. Sometimes it was hard to get food.

Silveri: Did you know any people that worked on the New Deal projects like the W.P.A. and the C.C.C.?

Gaston: I just know we had those things. I don't know that I knew anybody working.

Silveri: Were all of your brothers and sisters working during those years?

Gaston: Yes, when they finished school, they all got jobs and got married and were working in their homes. My oldest brother lived in Little Rock, Arkansas. He went there when he was nineteen, and he lived there until he died about two years ago. He was a cotton planter and raised cattle. I had a brother, my next brother, who was a county agent, ended up down in Salisbury in Rowan County, where he lives now.

The next youngest brother worked for the Chilean Nitrate Sales Corporation and traveled around the country for that. Then Walter was the youngest one. He was with Enka from the time he first went to Enka until his retirement a few years ago. That takes care of my brothers.

Silveri: What was your next position at Enka?

Gaston: They had what they called a machine room, where all of the payroll was done on adding machines there. Hand adding machines, not electric at that time. I went into the machine room. I was in charge of that room. I had about eight girls under me in that room, and I worked there for about four or five years, I guess. I can't remember exactly.

I don't know how I got into that part, anyhow, because I hadn't done that kind of work at Enka, but I did. Then I went back into the Welfare Department.

Silveri: Is that what it was called?

Gaston: I can't think of the . . . shame that I can't remember those, but they just go out of my mind. I was Personnel Counselor in the Industrial Relations Department for a good many years. I was that at my retirement. I worked with the girls, and I had my office right across from the cafeteria. The girls could come into the office, and I went into the departments, all the departments around, to see them. They had problems; we all had problems.

I was on the board of the Enka Credit Union on the Credit Committee, and just worked with. . . well, the men, too. Men would come to the office a lot of times for things; the girls and the men, too. That was my job 'til my retirement.

Silveri: Did you get to know any of the early Dutch people who came over here?

Gaston: Yes, I knew most of them. I knew the men who worked in the plant, because they would want things, a lot of times, done for them that I could do to help them, and they talked funny. One man was always wanting "helop" [help]. "Dorothy, I want some helop." That was Mr. Houtman. He was in charge of chemical[department].

Then I took visitors through the plant. Once I arranged the visitors' tours and arranged for guides and took them through the plant once a month. We'd have big groups of visitors. That was under my supervision.

What else did I do? I was with the girls' basketball team, and they went for games to Greenville, South Carolina, and to various sections around here. I went with the basketball teams all the time.

Gaston (Cont'd.): I have forgotten all of the things I did do when I try to tell you about them.

Silveri: It's pretty much like a big happy family at Enka, isn't it? They had a park, a lake, and all of that.

Gaston: Yes, I would say that it was a very good relationship most of the way, at the time, as far as I know. I know I liked to work for Enka. I liked it all the time I worked there. They were good people to work for, and I liked it.

Silveri: Did you know Claude Ramsey?

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: He worked in the plant.

Gaston: Yes, and it was remarkable the progress he made, because it seems to me like he hadn't been there so many years, just a young fellow, when he was president of the company. Nice fellow, nice fellow.

Silveri: How about some of the other people who have been working with him and have gone up to the top? You must have known quite a few of the people if you worked there for thirty years. Thirty-one years?

Gaston: I know I have.

Silveri: You've seen the expansion. During those thirty years the plant expanded to nylon production. It started with rayon, right? Then expanded to nylon production?

Gaston: Yes. Now the rayon is cut out entirely. That happened just recently, the rayon part. That was the first part of the plant, and there were about seventeen hundred people laid off when that

Gaston (Cont'd.): happened just this past year. Now they just have the nylon.

Silveri: Do you remember the war years? Do you remember World War II and how Enka got along during the war?

Gaston: Yes. You mean people leaving?

Silveri: Yes.

Gaston: Yes. I don't know whether there were too many people.

Silveri: They must have had a hard time finding help because so many had to go off to fight the war, but you had nothing to do with that?

Gaston: No, no.

Silveri: You were born here. Do you consider yourself a mountain person?

Gaston: A mountaineer? I certainly do!

Silveri: Do you consider yourself an Appalachian? Does that term mean anything to you?

Gaston: Well, I guess so. I certainly consider myself a mountaineer of the Appalachian Mountains.

Silveri: What about the culture of the mountains? Have you considered yourself part of the cultural. . .

Gaston: Well, I know in a lot of places that they are looked down on. They are hillbillies. They are considered very ignorant and very poor, and I guess they were at one time. But they are good people and honest people. Well, they are educated. They were educated to some extent. They are now a lot more than they were back in the early days.

Gaston (Cont'd.): I remember hearing this story: They were having a trial. . . a man down in Madison County. The man was testifying in his own behalf. He said, "Well, he hit me over the mazard with this stick." As I understand it, mazard is an English word for the skull. I don't know whether you've ever heard it, have you?

Silveri: No, I haven't.

Gaston: I never had heard it either, but anyhow he said, "He hit me over the mazard with this stick, and I hit him back." I remember hearing that, but I think there was . . . I know the people were good people, maybe not too highly educated.

Silveri: We read where Josiah was an important member of the Methodist church. Did the succeeding generations continue that relationship with the Methodist church?

Gaston: Some of them did. Some of them joined the Presbyterian church. My father was a Methodist, and my mother was a Presbyterian, and later he became a Presbyterian. They were always members of this church out here, Oak Forest Presbyterian Church. But some of the Gastons were Methodists; either Methodists or Presbyterians.

Silveri: You were telling me, after your father sold the land to Enka, and Enka bought up quite an extensive amount of land there, the Gaston and Jones family got together and bought these thirty acres here.

Gaston: Not the Jones, but some of the neighbors: the Gastons, the Fletchers, the Parkers, and Connors (Mr. Connor right out here on the corner). Then Mr. Starnes, son-in-law to Mr. Fletcher, bought one piece, too. He thought he was going to live out here, but he never did. But

Gaston (Cont'd.): they all built their homes, and they are right here now.

Silveri: Having sold all of his land to Enka, your father couldn't farm any longer, could he?

Gaston: Couldn't. My father was getting older at the time, and so he didn't farm any more. We just lived here, but he didn't do too well after he retired. I think it was just kind of not being used to working like he had always done. He died at the age of seventy-five. My mother died at the age of eighty-nine. One of her sisters died at the age of one-hundred-and-one and a-half.

Silveri: She would have had some long stories to tell, wouldn't she?

Gaston: She was a remarkable woman, Aunt Jennie Clark.

Silveri: Well, you have seen this area grow tremendously over the years, haven't you?

Gaston: I certainly have. If you had a chance to drive back up in the coves of the mountains here you would find pretty homes, modern homes, all through these mountains. A lot of them are the result of the American Enka Corporation.

Silveri: What about the City of Asheville? You must have had a lot to do with the City over the years?

Gaston: No, not particularly, but I've seen it grow. That was a result of Enka, too. Enka was the first big industry, really, that came here. Now industries come all the time and all around, but at first it was Enka. The Chamber of Commerce was very anxious to get Enka here, and they did.

Silveri: They were the biggest employers here in this area?

Gaston: Yes, and that helped the payrolls all around everywhere.

Silveri: I notice you have some more papers there. Do you have any more historical documents of the family?

Gaston: I don't know. I tried to find some things that I thought maybe you might be interested in. This is very, very fragile. I don't know if I can show it to you or not, but it's the original deed for the four hundred acres of land that was granted William Moore.

Silveri: Does it have a date on it also? What date does it have on there?

Gaston: I don't know whether you can read it. I have some photostatic copies. Maybe I could find one of those that you could. . . I'm sort of afraid to fool with this. This is just a genealogy chart from the Moore family. This was a small bit of history that Owen Gudger wrote about this section. Here's a book of David Lowery Swain. Somewhere here I had this picture of Sonny with his powder horn. There was Aunt Jennie's picture, the one who lived to be a hundred. So there's a copy of that. . .

Silveri: . . . of that deed. Dated North Carolina No. 1031: "Know ye that we have given and granted unto William Moore a tract of land containing four hundred and fifty acres, lying and being in our County of Burke, from both sides of Hominy Creek and both sides of the path that leads from the fording of French Broad River to the Cherokee Nation, beginning at a post Oak on the north side of the creek and a hollow, thence west seventy-five chains to a stake and two post Oaks, thence south, crossing a large branch, the path and creek aforesaid above the

Silveri (Cont'd.): "ford at Rutherford. Then sixty posts to a stake, thence east twenty-five chains to a stake, thence north passing the corner of his lower survey and crossing Hominy Creek to the beginning. To hold to the said William Moore, his heirs and assigns, forever. Dated the seventh day of August, 1787. Signed by R.D. Caswell."

Gaston: First Provisional Governor.

Silveri: First Provisional Governor of North Carolina. J. Glasgow, Secretary. This is from the Land Grant Book, Number 65, page 393, File Number 1031. But it says in the County of Burke. That is four hundred acres of land lying and being in the County of Burke.

Gaston: That was Burke County at that time. Now it's Buncombe. Several counties have been made out of all land that was Burke County. I don't know that you would want to read that, but you might be interested in seeing that. That's William Moore's account of his going out to the reservation.

Silveri: Oh, yes. This is published in William Moore Report, November 7, 1776. That's published in the North Carolina University Magazine, News Series, Volume VII, Number 3, page 90. Doesn't give the date of that, but it's an account of his activity with respect to the Cherokee Indians, right?

Gaston: Yes, but it's interesting to tell about the country. If you'd like to take it and read it, I would be glad if you'd like to.

Silveri: Yes, maybe I should do that, and perhaps I can make a copy and then send this back to you?

Gaston: Yes, you are perfectly welcome to, if you would like to.

Silveri: Fine. Good. I have these two I have already read on the tape.

Gaston: Oh, you got those on the tape, didn't you?

Silveri: Right. Is this a picture of your brother, Walter Gaston?

Gaston: That's Walter, yes.

Silveri: Gaston once cut Enka's water off. What happened? What was that story?

Gaston: He did. He's sort of quick tempered. My father sold them some of the mountain land up there. No. He didn't sell any of the mountain land. He sold the farm land, but he didn't sell the mountain land. Walter came home from college, and he loved to go up on that mountain and hunt. So off he went, and he was met by a uniformed Enka guard. The guard told him he couldn't hunt around there, that he couldn't be around on that property. Well, it's written right here.

He said, "Before he reached the summit a uniformed man chased him off the mountain, saying he was trespassing on the American Enka Corporation watershed." (My father owned springs up there and had piped the water from up there down to our home, and then he let these Dutchmen tap onto that water line. That's how it was.) "Gaston went home and learned from his father that Enka had asked and been given permission to tap onto the two-inch line, and all drinking water for the construction people and the Dutchmen who were then in training came off Gaston Mountain.

Gaston (Cont'd.): "'Are they paying for the water?' Gaston asked.

'No,' the father replied. So Gaston went straight to the tap, shut the valve, and cut off Enka's water. 'Within a few minutes,' Gaston says, 'here they came to see what was wrong. I told them I had shut off their water because they had run me off the land I had roamed on all my life. Well, they let me back on that mountain in a hurry.'"

Silveri: They had no animosity towards him, because they hired him later on, didn't they?

Gaston: No, they didn't hold that against him. Not too many years ago, they made a sort of a treaty, I guess you would call it, Enka did, with the Cherokee Indians out here: that they could come down to this Hominy Creek and get the canes for their baskets and their weaving. So Walter was in on that deal; he was working at Enka at the time.

If you look right over the telephone there in the corner of the dining room, you can take down that picture there. It was a newspaper clipping of their treaty that they made with the Indians. They gave Walter a peace pipe.

Silveri: That's a picture of Walter there?

Gaston: Yes.

Silveri: "As long as the green grass grows and the rivers flow, Cherokee and Enka share a peace pipe."

Gaston: Walter has the peace pipe, this long peace pipe, over at his house. He says in this here: "My great-grandfather built a fort to keep the Cherokees out of Hominy Valley, and I let them back in with a peace pipe."

Silveri: This story of Enka allowing them to come down to the Hominy River on Enka property to pick the reeds for their baskets?

Gaston: That's right. To make the baskets. Just put it on the table, Mr. Silveri, is all right.

[End of tape]